

Statue of Liberty shines brightly on 3 new coins

By Roger Boye

Uncle Sam's Statue of Liberty coins are rolling off production lines amid cheers from collectors.

Treasury executives unveiled designs of the three commemoratives at first-strike ceremonies last month in West Point, N.Y., and San Francisco. Nearly every hobby leader attending expressed delight with the freshly minted coins on display, according to reports in the numismatic press.

Those accolades contrast with the discord three years ago after officials released designs of U.S. Olympic coinage. The initial drawings were the subject of widespread criticism and a congressional hearing, prompting mint artists to make refinements.

One statue-coin receiving praise is the \$5 gold piece depicting a close-up of Liberty's face. Designer Elizabeth Jones told a Coin World reporter she picked the pose because Liberty's gaze is beautiful and because she wanted the coin "immediately and easily recognizable."

The silver dollar—designed by another government artist, John Mercanti—depicts a full view of the statue in front of an immigration building on Ellis Island. Mercanti's grandparents passed through the building when they emigrated from Italy in the 1920s.

On the copper-nickel half dollar, Miss Liberty overlooks the New York skyline, and a family of immigrants adorns the tails side.

The three coins are available in a dozen sales options, with price discounts offered until Dec. 31. For information, write to the U.S. Mint, U.S. Liberty Coin Program, 633 Third St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20220. Coins will be shipped beginning in January.

Incidentally, Numismatic News suggests that the \$5 gold piece [containing .24 ounce of gold] could sell out quickly; by law, the mint can make no more than 500,000 such specimens. Part of the money from each coin sale will help pay for repairs to the statue and to immigration facilities on Ellis Island.

● A New York dealer paid \$275,000 at an October auction for one of about 10 known 1927-D \$20 gold pieces. A similar coin brought \$198,000 in a July 1984 auction.

● As many as 150 coins, bills and stamps from Vietnam are on display until Dec. 1 at the Skokie Public Library, 5215 W. Oakton St., Skokie, as part of the library's salute to Vietnam veterans.